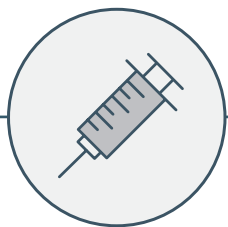


The Flu, COVID-19 and Parkinson's

While having Parkinson's disease (PD) doesn't seem to increase risk for catching the flu or COVID-19, being older does. And when people with Parkinson's get sick with any illness, including the flu or COVID-19, motor and non-motor symptoms can temporarily worsen.

As we enter flu season, consider these tips to protect yourself and your health:



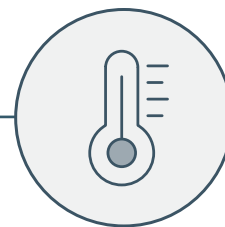
Get a flu shot.

A vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and others from the flu. It's especially important for people 65 and older, who are at higher risk for getting the flu or having more significant flu symptoms, and those who live with or care for people at higher risk. The best time to get vaccinated is in the fall so that protection lasts throughout the winter. During the pandemic, you may have to be more playful about getting your shot: scheduling your next in-person doctor or pharmacy visit for a time when you also can safely get vaccinated, for example. (If you have an in-home caregiving service, ask if they can provide vaccinations.)



Continue pandemic precautions.

Regular handwashing, staying home if you don't feel well, and sneezing or coughing into your elbow are all common-sense precautions to guard against the spread of respiratory illnesses, including the flu and COVID-19. These activities — as well as wearing a mask and keeping distance in public — have become second nature for many of us during the pandemic. Keep them up as flu enters the mix.



Watch for new or increased symptoms.

Any illness can bring on new PD motor and non-motor symptoms or increase ongoing ones, such as mood changes and fatigue. The flu and COVID have similar symptoms, including fever, cough, shortness of breath and others. But they also have some differences, such as more smell and taste loss with COVID-19. ([See the Centers for Disease Control website for more.](#)) If you notice new or worsening symptoms, especially if flu- or COVID-like, talk with your doctor so you can discuss next steps, such as testing and treatment. (While there is no cure for either flu or COVID-19, prescription Tamiflu [oseltamivir] can decrease flu length and severity when taken within 48 hours of symptom onset.)





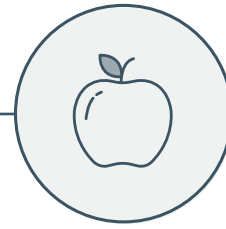
Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking over-the-counter medications.

Just because you can buy a medication without a prescription doesn't mean it's without possible side effects or drug interactions. Ask your doctor which medications are safe for mild headaches, cold symptoms or cough, for example. Some over-the-counter cold, sinus or cough medications (e.g., Sudafed, Robitussin or Nyquil) can interact with Parkinson's drugs such as Azilect (rasagiline), selegiline or Xadago (safinamide). Always double-check before taking any new medication.



Be prepared.

Think about what information would be helpful if you do fall ill during this time. Keep a list of medications, what they are for and who prescribes them. Add the names of your primary and Parkinson's doctors as well as any other specialists you see. Review this list regularly — at least after every doctor visit — and update as necessary. Keep a bag to carry your medications in their bottles to and from in-person doctor visits — one that you also can take to the emergency room or hospital, if needed. Also, remember to check if you need medication refills, request early in case of pharmacy or mail-order delays, and ask for a three-month supply, if possible.



Take care of yourself.

During the pandemic, many people are, understandably, experiencing increased anxiety and sleep changes as well as difficulty sticking to a healthy diet and regular exercise routine. These can increase Parkinson's symptoms and increase risk for illness. Try to start or continue working out, which can help with mood and sleep and often goes hand-in-hand with healthier eating. And make sure to keep regular visits with your doctor and, if helpful, a mental health therapist. Most providers are available through telemedicine, so you don't have to leave home to get care.

For more information and tips on COVID-19 and Parkinson's, visit michaeljfox.org/COVID-19-Hub.

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For blogs and videos on the latest in Parkinson's research and care, visit michaeljfox.org/ask-the-md.

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